

Midsomer Norton Urban District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, For the Year 1904.

GENTLEMEN,—I beg to present my report of health for the year 1904, together with the tables of statistics required by the Local Government Board

Population.—Estimated to the middle of 1904 : 6,048.

Geology.—In the valleys the soil is clay overlying conglomerate rock, on the high ground red loam overlying beds of lias. The land is chiefly pasture and well timbered in places. The water supply of the hill fields is mainly derived from shallow wells, in the valleys from ponds and streams.

Occupations.—Coal-mining, agriculture, manufacturing boots and shoes, and brewing.

Births.—The number of births registered during the year was 197 : 96 boys and 101 girls, giving a birth-rate of 32·57 per 1000 persons living in the district.

The following table gives the number of births registered in each quarter of the year :—

	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
1st Quarter ...	25	25	50
2nd Quarter ...	25	24	49
3rd Quarter ...	24	24	48
4th Quarter ...	22	28	50
	96	101	197

Deaths.—The number of deaths registered during the year was 55 : 29 males, 26 females, giving a death-rate of 9·09 per 1000 persons in the district. So far as I can ascertain this is the lowest recorded death-rate in this district. The following table gives the mortality in each quarter of the year with the respective death-rate :—

	Males.	Females.	Total.	Rate per 1000.
1st Quarter ..	12	11	23	15·2
2nd Quarter...	8	4	12	7·93
3rd Quarter ...	5	6	11	7·27
4th Quarter ..	4	5	9	5·95
	29	26	55	9·09

The following table gives the mortality in the various localities of the district :—

Midsomer Norton and Welton	...	37
Clandown	...	9
Downside	...	3
Westfield	...	4
Clapton	...	2
		55

The causes of death at all ages were :—

Whooping Cough	...	1	Bright's Disease	...	5
Diarrhoea	...	2	Perforation of Bowel	...	1
Phthisis	...	5	Worms	...	1
{ Carcinoma	...	6	Malformation of Ure-	...	1
{ Cancer	...	2	thra and Bladder	...	1
Acute Bronchitis	...	2	Senile Decay...	...	5
Chronic Bronchitis	...	2	Suffocation	...	1
Pneumonia	...	1	Cerebral Hæmorrhage	...	2
Broncho-Pneumonia	...	2	Gout	...	1
Premature Birth	...	3	Rheumatic Arthritis	...	1
Heart Disease	...	3	Inanition	...	1
Accidents	...	5	Cardiac Syncope	...	2

The following are the ages at which death took place :—

Under 12 months of age	...	...	13
1 year and under 5 years	...	...	2
5 years and under 15 years	...	...	1
15 years and under 25 years	...	...	2
25 years and under 65 years	...	...	20
65 years and upwards	...	...	17
			55

There were 13 deaths under one year, which gives an infant mortality rate of 65·98.

The causes of infant mortality were :—

Premature Birth	...	3	Malformation	...	1
Pneumonia	...	1	Acute Bronchitis	...	1
Broucho-Pneumonia	...	2	Inanition	...	1
Suffocation	...	1	Whooping Cough	...	1
Diarrhoea	...	2			

The following deaths have taken place from among the seven principal Zymotic Diseases :—

Whooping Cough	...	1	Diarrhoea	...	2
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The Zymotic death-rate is 49 per 1000 persons in the district.

Infectious Diseases.—The following cases have been notified during the year :—

	1st qtr.	2nd qtr.	3rd qtr.	4th qtr.	Totl.
Scarlet Fever...	16	6	2	1	25
Typhoid	2	3	1	1	7
Erysipelas	1	—	—	1	2
Chicken-Pox	3	9	18	—	30
	22	18	21	3	64

Sickness.—During the first quarter of the year an outbreak of 16 cases of a mild form of scarlet fever occurred, and during the succeeding nine months nine other cases were notified of a sporadic nature. Out of a total of 25 cases, 13 were treated at the Isolation Hospital. Seven cases of typhoid fever were notified during the year : six of these were treated at the Isolation Hospital. The source of infection was probably derived from some cases in an adjoining district. The water and milk supply, with one exception, being free from suspicion. In the case arising at Silver-street the well - water used gave, upon analysis, distinct evidence of sewage contamination. The general health of the district in other respects has been satisfactory during the year.

Sanitation : Isolation Hospital.—The accommodation at the Cottage Hospital does not meet the requirements of the district. I would again draw the Council's attention to the fact that no arrangements exist for the immediate isolation of small-pox patients.

Disinfection.—No arrangements exist for disinfecting clothes or bedding. Sulphur and formalin fumigation, and washing with carbolic acid, are used for rooms. A large spray for disinfectants is much needed, specially for old houses with large chimneys, fumigation in such places being impracticable.

Prevention of Consumption.—I am convinced that some system of voluntary notification of

phthisis should be adopted by the Council. By this means disinfectants and leaflets on hygiene could be distributed, dwelling-rooms disinfected in cases of removal from house to house or from the locality, or after death.

Water Supply.—The new water supply scheme from the Gurney Slade Spring is approaching completion. In the Downside district some houses have already been connected with the mains.

Housing of the Working Classes.—The demand for new houses still continues. From a health-point of view, insufficient regard is still paid to the pathways and approaches of the new houses and terraces. With reference to the older houses a few thatched cottages remain, many houses exist built back to back, while others have no back windows or other outlet for through ventilation. I am glad to say some of the latter class have been recently remedied.

Pathways.—A paved way is greatly needed between Stone's Cross and Welton.

House Refuse and Scavenging.—The removal of house and other refuse is not undertaken by the Council. I cannot too strongly urge the Council to adopt some measure for its more frequent removal. Such a system as now exists should not be allowed to continue in a town with the population of Midsomer Norton. The present method of depositing house refuse and ashes by the roadside, or in the gardens within a few feet of the dwelling, is distinctly objectionable. Such deposits are allowed to accumulate for weeks and months, and in summer time the putrifying animal and vegetable matter often becomes highly offensive.

Sewerage and Drainage.—Midsomer Norton and Clandown are to a large extent sewered, the sewage being treated at the respective works. Earth closets and cesspits are still in vogue at Downside, Clapton, Westfield and other outlying parts of the districts. It is to be hoped the contemplated schemes of drainage for Westfield and the Norton-hill-terraces and for the houses above Midsomer Norton Station will be carried out during 1905.

Schools.—There are six day schools in the district: 4 at Midsomer Norton, 1 at Clandown, and 1 at Downside. The accommodation at the present time barely meets the required need of the district, and additional building is contemplated. I wish to draw the attention of the Educational Authorities to the following recommendations:—

1. That school children should be instructed in elementary hygiene;

2. That a systematic medical inspection of school children, undertaken periodically, would result in much good.

From personal observation I believe many children attend school while suffering from defective eyesight, a still larger number from diseases of the ears, nose and throat; while the general neglect and bad state of the teeth is something appalling.

3. That greater attention should be given to physical exercises in schools, and that the instruction should be given by competent trained gymnasts.

Provision against Fire.—The Radstock Fire Brigade are under an agreement to attend fires with an engine. Considering the factories and other large buildings in this district it is to be hoped an escape may be procured in the near future, as well as the means of extinguishing fires.

Slaughter - Houses.—Three licensed slaughter-houses are in use. One old and badly-constructed slaughter-house has been abandoned during the year.

Mortuary.—I would draw the Council's attention to the urgent necessity of a mortuary for this district.

Factories and Workshops' Act, 1901.—There are 11 factories, 43 workshops and 7 bakehouses in the district. With a view to meeting the requirements of the Act 55, separate inspections have been made during the year, and six notices have been served dealing with cleanliness. The structural alterations recommended in a factory towards the end of 1903 were carried out during 1904. These included an iron outside stairway, new sanitary arrangements for men and women, and improved ventilation. The register has been revised, and the required table duly filled up is appended. The outworkers in the district are makers of boots and shoes.

Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops.—The dairies generally are satisfactory, but the water supply is of poor quality on many farms. This will be remedied during 1905, when the new water scheme is complete. Cowsheds are generally above the average. Milkshops and dairies are inspected periodically, and register kept.

Common Lodging Houses.—None in the district.

Burial Ground.—Burials have taken place in the cemetery on several occasions during the past year at a higher level than the prescribed depth. This was reported upon to the Council and steps taken to prevent its repetition.

Appended are tables I., II., III., IV.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

ARTHUR BULLEID, M.O.H.